



## Prach Ly

On Saturday, March 27, at 3:00 pm rap artist Prach Ly will perform and discuss music from his debut CD, **Dalama K ... the endin' is just the beginnin'** and his latest CD, **Dalama... the lost chapter**.

The subject of a Newsweek International article entitled, "*Hip Hop about Pol Pot*", Prach Ly is the young man from Long Beach who recorded his first CD in his parents' garage and was amazed to learn that it had risen to the top of the charts in Phnom Penh, after it had been pirated and then placed on Napster. His second CD follows the first, mixing lyrics in hip hop or rap with classical Cambodian flute and other amazing sounds.

Although he says he respects gangsta rap pioneers like Dr. Dre, Ly promotes nonviolence in his own rapping. "I don't believe in violence. I do believe in the cause of justice. I wish Cambodia was like that." Prach Ly is also concerned that young Cambodian Americans born in this country should learn about their own classical culture.

The intricate drawings that illustrate his CD covers, drawn by Ly himself, present a beautiful merging of monuments from the two cultures (e.g. The bow of the Queen Mary and a Cambodian fishing boat; the statue of liberty and a tall tower from Angkor Wat...) Enlarged reproductions of Ly's drawings will be exhibited during his program at Riverside Public Library on March 27.

All programs are open to the public free of charge.  
Information: (909) 826 – 5369

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Review from the February 2004 issue of Rock & Rap Confidential ([www.rockrap.com](http://www.rockrap.com))

EAST WEST... Cambodian-American rapper Prach Ly was born in Battambang province in 1979. The genocidal reign of the Khmer Rouge was just ending, with its toll of two million people killed-including 90 per cent of the country's musicians-under an insane concept of "revolution." Prach and his family walked for days through land mine-infested fields to escape, ultimately winding up in America's tenth-poorest city, Long Beach, whose 55,000 Cambodian residents are the world's largest concentration outside Phnom Penh.

It's all there in Prach Ly's latest CD Dalama..."the lost chapter" ([mujestic.com](http://mujestic.com)), the first musical description of the killing fields. It's recorded in a barebones garage studio, yet it's bass-heavy sound is pulse-quickening and persuasive. Songs like "The Great Escape" and "Power, Territory, and Rice" are history lessons that satisfy musically, and there's a major contribution throughout from master traditional musician Ho C. Chan. Some of the vocals are in Cambodia's Khmer language, which is an important unifying element since the generation gap among Cambodian-Americans is wide, revolving around whether English or Khmer is spoken.

Dalama... "the lost chapter" has been massively bootlegged in Cambodia, where it's gone to number one. (Newsweek calls Ly "Cambodia's first rap star.") The CD is slowly but surely finding an audience in the U.S., where its significance isn't likely to be in numbers sold but in the potential interaction with Prach Ly and the loose network he's part of--Cambodian musicians, filmmakers, and artists of all kinds (Prach's brother's tricked-out car was in 2 Fast 2 Furious).

However isolated the Cambodian ghettos in the U.S. may be and however distant Cambodia itself may seem, there are countless connections to be made among us all. It begins with the war in Indochina, which brought so much death and disease--from post-traumatic stress disorder to Agent Orange poisoning--to Cambodian and American alike. It was the massive U.S. bombing of Cambodia--three times greater than all the bombs dropped on Japan during World War II--which literally destroyed Cambodian society and created a vacuum the Khmer Rouge could exploit. The INS is targeting Cambodian-American "gang youth" for deportation, even though they may no longer know anyone back home and don't speak Khmer. This ties them to other deportees who may be Mexican, Polish, Irish, or Haitian. Cambodia now exports over a billion dollars a year worth of sweatshop-produced clothing to the U.S. (two Cambodian workers were shot and killed by Phnom Penh police during a demonstration last year). This situation is tailor-made for the growing anti-sweatshop movement here. The passage of Proposition 227 in California in 1998 has virtually eliminated Khmer/English bilingual language classes, just as it has swept away Spanish/English and many others.

We have a lot to talk about and Prach Ly will make a good discussion leader. If you're lucky, you may be able to see for yourself on his upcoming nationwide tour commemorating the 25th anniversary of the end of the Cambodian holocaust. A preview took place at the Martin Luther King birthday celebration in Long Beach on January 17, where 98% of the thousands of people in attendance were black. Prach took the mic a little nervously before announcing he'd written a speech for the occasion. "I'm really honored to be here, to be a part of this," he said. "Now let me ask you a question. How many of you have Cambodian friends? [some hands shoot up] How many of you have Asian friends? [more hands shoot up] Those that didn't raise their hands, you have a Cambodian friend, starting today. Me!" He went on to quote a few lines from John Lennon's "Imagine" before doing three tunes in English and Khmer while pulling dancers up out of the crowd.

As Prach's father, Seng Ly, says on "peaCe," the CD's last track: "We shouldn't argue about race. We are all one. We must learn to live together."